The Accredited Culture Syllabus Directed to Master One Level From the Lenses of EFL Teachers

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Abstract:

This study seeks to examine the syllabus of the culture module directed to Master One students in terms of available and missing items, drawing on the work of Doolittle and Siudzinski in 2010 to identify syllabi essential items. In addition, the study aims to elicit teachers' viewpoints on the usefulness of this syllabus and their suggestions to improve it. Therefore, a questionnaire and an interview with teachers responsible for the culture module were conducted. Also, a checklist has been implemented to cross-validate the questionnaire's results on the inclusion of essential syllabus items. The findings revealed that the culture syllabus lacks critical sections and key specifics for each section. Moreover, teachers perceive the syllabus as ineffective since they seldom refer to it during the academic year. This study recommends that a remedial syllabus be designed.

Keywords: *accredited culture syllabus; culture module; EFL students; EFL teachers; Master One students*

ملخص:

تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى فحص منهج وحدة الثقافة الموجه لطلبة السنة الأولى ماستر من حيث العناصر المتاحة والمفقودة ، بالاعتماد على عمل دوليتل وسيودزينسكي في عام 2010 لتحديد العناصر الأساسية للمناهج الدراسية. بالإضافة إلى ذلك ، تهدف الدراسة إلى استنباط وجهات نظر المعلمين حول فائدة هذا المنهج واقتراحاتهم لتحسينه. ولهذا الغرض ، تم إجراء استبيان ومقابلة مع المعلمين المسؤولين عن وحدة الثقافة. أيضًا ، تم تنفيذ قائمة مراجعة للتحقق من صحة نتائج الاستبيان على تضمين عناصر المنهج الدراسي الأساسية. كشفت النتائج أن منهج الثقافة يفتقر إلى أقسام هامة وتفاصيل رئيسية في كل قسم. علاوة على ذلك ، يرى المعلمون أن المنهج الدراسي غير فعال لأنهم نادرًا ما يرجعون اليه خلال العام الدراسي. توصي هذه الدراسة بإعادة تصميم المنهج الحالي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: *طلبة السنة أولى ماستر؛ طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية؛ مدرسو اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية؛ منهج الثقافة المعتمد؛ وحدة الثقافة*

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I. INTRODUCTION

The importance and usefulness of syllabi in the context of Algerian higher education seem to be underestimated. The processes for developing or reforming syllabi are vague especially for higher education teachers (Asma, 2021). Syllabi are of paramount importance for that they clarify what teachers anticipate students to do to successfully complete the course (Imasuen, 1999). Additionally, syllabi specify the learning objectives and the assignments, exams, and other projects that students must accomplish over the semester (Habanek, 2005). Furthermore, they outline the instructional materials as well as general policies such as absenteeism, grades, and late work, among other things. Generally speaking, they shape the road map on how the course will take place for both teachers and students.

The literature has a wealth of information on some minimal criteria for the syllabus' composing elements. Numerous research in general and individual topic areas have been conducted to determine the most effective syllabus components in terms of structure and content (Bers et al., 2000; Habanek, 2005; Slattery & Carlson, 2005). There is a need to harmonize the criteria of accredited syllabi in the Algerian higher education context with those of syllabi regulations provided in the literature, notably for the culture syllabus addressed in the present research. Therefore, the cultural syllabus is supposed to be an interesting source of information for teachers and students that marginalizing it would negatively impact the teaching/learning process. It should communicate not only students' responsibilities and tasks, but also serve as a reference for them throughout the school year for module-related information and regulations, as well as provide topic areas and resources that benefit teachers in lesson planning. Thus, it is critical to ascertain the extent to which and the effectiveness with which the existing culture syllabus transmits important information to students and teachers. Particular interest is on the syllabus of culture since language and culture are intricately intertwined, necessitating that every language learner be aware of the topic's sensitivity, particularly in cross-cultural communicative encounters and future teaching practices. Notably, research on the content, structure, and purpose of syllabi is few, particularly in the Algerian context of higher education (Asma, 2021).

This research is significant as it provides policymakers and syllabus/curriculum designers with implications for redesigning the current culture syllabus by addressing its potential deficiencies. The research aims to examine the syllabus of the culture module addressed to Master One students in terms of available and missing elements, using the research of Doolittle and Siudzinski (2010) as a basis. Additionally, it tries to ascertain the syllabus' practicality for culture teachers. Finally, it aims to elicit teachers' recommendations for its improvement.

1. Background of the Study

The idea of syllabus has been established as a consequence of several scholars' contributions to the evolution of the curriculum concept. The earliest organized curriculum has its beginnings in the second half of the twentieth century. Tyler made one of the most significant observations on the nature and process of curriculum design in 1949, in a work that sparked a resurgence in curriculum studies in the 1950s. On the first page, he summarized his approach: When developing a curriculum or, there are four basic questions that must be addressed. They are as follows: (1) What academic objectives should the school pursue? (2) What educational opportunities exist that are likely to help accomplish these goals? (3) How should these instructional experiences be structured optimally? (4) How can we determine whether or not these objectives have been met? (Tyler, 1949, as cited in Schiro, 2013, p. 58). A syllabus, then, specifies the course's content and details how it will be taught and assessed. The number of studies contacted in the literature regarding syllabus and syllabus design is a mere indicator of the importance of syllabi.

1.1. The Importance of Syllabi

Numerous research studies have shown the crucial role of syllabi. Bers et al. (1996) consider that a syllabus represents the most thorough public description of what will be covered in class. This implies that syllabi should be densely packed with the information that students and

teachers need. According to Slattery & Carlson (2005), a syllabus establishes the path of the course. It helps students to set appropriate objectives. Additionally, faculty may use it to schedule lessons and monitor their students' progress throughout the semester. Moreover, it functions as a contract between faculty and student, establishing mutual expectations. Finally, It is utilized as a portfolio for tenure, promotion, and employment applications.

A well-designed syllabus may reduce or eliminate students' confusion and frustration, resulting in more meaningful learning. For teachers, a syllabus serves as a detailed road map, allowing them to move the educational process ahead gradually and logically throughout the course (Slattery & Carlson, 2005). In more emphasis on objectives, Johnson and Ferguson (1998) demonstrated that clear objectives provide the basis for effective learning, which is why it is critical to have defined rather than vague objectives. For instance, the terms "know," "appreciate," and "understand" should be avoided in favor of the terms "identify," "analyze," and "implement". Current research overwhelmingly supports the idea that the syllabus is a useful and supporting component of the learning process both inside and outside the classroom. It is unsurprising, then, that the literature has examined what should be included in this multi-functional document.

1.2. Components of a Good Syllabus

Although syllabi vary in terms of style and design, they often share key components. Bers et al. (1996) outlined eleven essential components for syllabi as follows:

Course related information such as course prefix, number, name, and credit, prerequisite prior to course launching; course description; learning objectives; academic integrity statement; course contents; instruction methods; course assignments and homework such as reading, oral presentation...etc.; instructional materials such as textbooks, evaluation methods such as tests and class participation; course policy information regarding attendance, tardiness, incomplete assignments; and references to support services such as tutoring and important college dates. (p. 14)

Even with the criteria mentioned in the literature, studies have demonstrated that a considerable majority of syllabi do not conform with these fundamental standards (Ison, 2010). Syllabi's constituent elements were found to be diverse, with just a few of the 25 syllabi contained core components such as the instructional approach to be used (Davidson et al., 2003). According to Drisko (2008), only a handful of the 48 syllabi examined covered the course's main topics. Students and teachers may have difficulty with inadequate, inconsistent, or unclear syllabi; hence, providing all pertinent information in the syllabus is important for increased usefulness.

1.3. A Culture Syllabus: What to Include?

Because there are so many topics, categories, and dimensions to consider, it is difficult to construct a single, all-encompassing syllabus to teach a foreign culture. This implies that a culture syllabus may be tailored to fit a learner's age, level of language proficiency, and particular learning needs, among other factors.

The table below introduces some common models of cultural syllabi classified chronologically. Each model comprises several topics developed by different researchers.

Table (1): Culture Syllabus Models

Syllabus Model	Topics Included
Chastain (1988)	The model includes 37 topics namely: Family, Home, Meeting personal needs, Eating, Social interaction, Education, Leisure activities, Courtship and marriage, Money, Earning a living, Economic system, Politics, Contemporary scene, Religion, Vacations, Travel, Daily routines, Pets, The press, Holidays, Transportation, Language, Ecology, Population, Crime, Humor, Death, Clothing, Geography, Correspondence, Services (e.g., medical, postal, banking, police), Health and welfare, Commonly known history, Retirement, Good manners, Courtesy phrases, Nonverbal communication.
Stern and	Places, individual persons and way of life, people and society in general, history, institution, art,

Allen (1992)	music, literature, and other major achievements.
Tomalin and Stempleski (1993)	(1) **Behaviors:** Customs, Habits Clothing, Foods Recreation. (2) **Beliefs:** Ideas, Values, and institutions. (3) **Products:** Literature, folklore, art, music, artifacts.
Byram and Morgan (1994)	- **Social identity and social groups** (e.g., social class-ethic and cultural minorities). - **Social interaction** (e.g., social relationships, making requests at various levels, taboos). - **Beliefs and behaviors** (e.g., why do people go to church- how to use phone boxes). - **Socio-political institutions** (e.g., parliament, law and order). - **Socialization and life-cycle** (e.g., schools, family, and education). - **National history** (e.g., eras and events). - **National geography** (e.g., population distribution, topography, climate). - **National cultural heritage** (e.g., embodiments from national culture). - **Stereotypes and national identity** (e.g., symbols and meanings of national stereotypes).
Byram and Risager (1999)	History, daily life and routines, shopping, food and drink, youth culture (e.g., fashion, music), school and education, geography and regions, family life, social and living conditions, festivities and customs, ethnic relations, racism, tourism and travel, working life, and unemployment.
Moran (2001)	- **Explicit facets of culture** (products, practices, communities, and persons). - **Tacit aspects of culture** (perspectives).
Hasselgreen (2003)	- **"Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions"**, for instance in homes, schools, and at weddings. - **"Ability to deal with social conventions"**, such as appropriate manners while eating, meeting people, dressing. - **"Confidence with values, beliefs and attitudes"**, for instance, to know what worries people, makes them proud or ashamed. - **"Ability to use verbal communication means"**, like to greet, apologize, make requests, express gratitude, embarrassment, and love. - **"Ability to use non-verbal language"**, i.e., body language and facial expressions.

It was noticed that the models share common topics. Therefore, the researcher has opted for Hasselgreen's (2003) model as it fits the purposes of this study. To begin, the model stresses a learner-centered approach to building students' basic intercultural communication skills. The latter is the commonly used approach by Algerian universities as a result of the new educational reform in 2016. Additionally, the model is thorough in that each of its components embodies a variety of topics at once. It is noteworthy that the researcher has added three main elements to this model to ensure its comprehensiveness. The elements added are: 'commonly known history', 'geography' and 'art, music, and literature'.

II. Methodology:

2.1. Research Purpose

In light of the syllabus' importance for both instructors and students, as well as the overall teaching/learning process, this exploratory analytic study attempted to analyze the culture module syllabus for the master one level. The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not this document effectively communicates course goal (s) and objectives, content, assessment and evaluation plan, teaching materials and resources, course description, prerequisites, teacher contact information, grading policy, course policy, and a list of relevant references. Additionally, this study sought to examine the usefulness of the present accredited culture syllabus (ACS, henceforth) for teachers.

2.2. Research Questions

RQ1. Does The accredited culture module syllabus include components described as essential within the research literature particularly: course descriptions, learning objectives, the content, the instructional materials, assessment and evaluation procedures, references for both teachers and students, and class policies statements?

RQ2. How useful is the ACS for Master One teachers?

RQ3. What do teachers suggest to improve the currently ACS?

2.3. Research Context

2.3.1. Description of the Accredited Syllabus of Culture

The syllabus targeted by this study is the accredited syllabus of culture addressed to Master One level in the department of English language and literature at the University of Mohamed Lamine Debaghine, Setif 2 Algeria. The culture module has been introduced to masters' levels only (master 1 and 2) starting in the academic year 2016/2017. The Anglo-American Studies specialty, as well as the Language Sciences and Didactics specialization, are taught using the same syllabus. The syllabus has two different axes for each semester. The first semester's ax is "cross-cultural communication (CCC)" with the primary objective to raise students' awareness of the cultural differences between the home and target culture. While in the second semester, the module is entitled "Teaching Culture in the EFL Classroom" with the main objective to equip students with the necessary knowledge on how to integrate culture along with language instruction in the EFL context. The presently accredited syllabus of culture, introduced in the French language, consists of five main sections namely: course information, teaching objectives "Objectifs de l'enseignement », recommended prior knowledge « Connaissances préalables recommandées », evaluation method « Mode d'évaluation », and references « Références » (cf. Appendix A). Each semester, 21 hours of teaching are provided, with 1h30 reserved for lectures and 1h30 reserved for tutorial sessions. Therefore, a total of 42 hours of teaching is scheduled for the module in both semesters. This equates to seven lecture sessions and seven tutorial sessions, each lasting 1h30. For the entire academic year, there will be a total of 14 lectures and 14 tutorial sessions. It is worth noting that these numbers pertain mainly to the academic year of 2019-2020.

2.3.2. Participants

Teachers from the English language and literature department at Mohamed Lamine Debaghine Setif 2 university were involved in this study. Participants in the questionnaire represented all culture teachers at the department (N=3) with two males and one female. The selection was purposeful based on the criterion that they are/were in charge of the module of culture. They have knowledge and experience in teaching this module and; therefore, there is a high likelihood they will provide well-informed views.

2.4. Instrumentation and Data Collection

This study used a mixed-method design with data being collected and analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. Three main instruments were implemented namely: a questionnaire, a follow-up interview, and an adapted checklist.

2.4.1. Likert Scale Questionnaire

A Likert scale questionnaire has been implemented to collect data. When compared to many other techniques of primary data gathering, questionnaires provide faster data collecting, little or no budgetary requirements, and a high degree of objectivity (Gideon, 2012). The purpose of this questionnaire was to ascertain teachers' perceptions of the components of the currently ACS.

The questionnaire is divided into three sections: a cover sheet, a section devoted to background information, and a section devoted to syllabus design. The cover sheet describes the purpose of the research and assures teachers of the confidentiality of their responses. The background section elicits data on teachers' academic credentials, teaching experience, and other important aspects. The main section has 56 items, developed based on the frequently reoccurring items that are deemed essential (Doolittle & Siudzinski, 2010). The questionnaire was administered to teachers in charge of the culture module, who responded by agreeing or disagreeing with different statements on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 =

strongly agree). The 56 items of the questionnaire were categorized under five main sections (cf. appendix B) each of which was further subdivided into purposive sub-sections. The following table summarizes the sub-sections and the items they include.

Table (2): The Questionnaire's Categories, Subsections, and Associated Items

Main Section	Sub-sections	Items included
Educational goals and objectives	a. Appropriateness of structure and meaning.	This includes ten positively worded items (#1-10) in the way that addresses how the goals and objectives of a syllabus should be stated clearly. A sample of a positively worded item is: "the educational objectives are clearly stated" A high score on this item would reflect a positive attitude.
	b. Learner-related factors.	(# 11-13) The focus is on taking the learner into account in setting the goals and objectives of this syllabus.
	c. Syllabus goal path.	(#14, 15) concerns with the nature of the end-goal of this syllabus be it merely for theoretical purposes or it has some practical insights.
Syllabus Content	a. Presentation of the content	(# 1- 4). This deals mainly with how the content is presented in addition to the allotted hours and alignment with goals and objectives
	b. Syllabus types	here, the items (#5-8) try to reveal the type(s) that the current syllabus of culture falls into.
	c. Possible culture content	ten items (# 9-18) were suggested in terms of content based on the possible topics to be taught in a culture module. These items were drawn conclusively from a number of models on what a culture syllabus should encompass (Hasselgreen, 2003).
	d. Learner-related factors	Similar to the previous section, this sub-section (items from 19-22) also takes into account factors related to students such as level, background knowledge...etc.
	e. Teaching-related factors	(#23-25). They spot the light on some considerations while teaching culture for example the home culture of students, teachers' expectations…etc.
Evaluation		This section was taken completely without being divided into sub-sections. It comprises five items (from 1-5). They address notions of evaluation and assessment practices in terms of sufficiency, appropriateness, purpose, evaluation plan… etc.
Instructional Materials and Resources	a. Availability of materials	Items (#1-4) address the availability of materials in the syllabus of culture.
	b. Usefulness of materials	items (# 5-8) try to reveal whether the available materials in the current syllabus are useful to teachers and students or not. (do they make use of them?).
Miscellaneous		This section was addressed as a whole. It tackles some items related to the sufficiency of hours, description of the module, and titles given to the module in each semester

2.4.2. Follow-Up Interview

An interview, according to Cohen et al. (2017) is a flexible data gathering strategy since it allows for spontaneity and enables the interviewer to seek not just comprehensive responses but also responses to complicated and profound concerns through follow-up questions.

This study conducted a follow-up interview in order to cover any missing gaps in the questionnaire items and any possible superficiality of the findings. This is why this interview

aims to provide additional space for teachers to express their opinions more freely about how practical the current syllabus is to them and how they would modify various sections of the current syllabus, i.e., the modifications they believe are necessary to make the culture syllabus an effective and easy-to-use tool.

The interview is comprised of six primary questions, as well as a few follow-up questions that arose over the course of the conversation. The interview with three teachers responsible for the cultural module lasted about an hour, with one teacher lasting almost an hour and a half. Prior to the commencement of the interview, consent was acquired from teachers to record their conversations. The responses were then analyzed qualitatively via the use of coding and theme generation.

2.4.3. Evaluation Checklist Grid

A checklist is a document that lists the characteristics of effective educational materials for the evaluator. These criteria can be used to determine the quality of the materials being evaluated (Reijers et al., 2017).

2.4.3.1. Checklist Adaptation

The checklist used in this study has been adapted from an original checklist created by Peter E. Doolittle and Robert A. Siudzinski in 2010. Based on evidence-driven from the literature and, in an attempt to understand the recommendations for syllabus components; the researchers have examined 15 sources addressing college teaching and syllabus construction. They reached 24 agreed-upon components after many examinations, which indicated four major component categories: "Instructor Information, Course Information, Grading Information, And Policy Information". The researchers validated their findings regarding these components by referring primarily to two experimental investigations, one conducted by Garavalia et al. in 1999 and another conducted by Baker and Calhoun in 1999, in which the categories identified by Doolittle and Sudzinski (2010) closely align with the findings of those investigations.

Apart from the four component categories, the present research's checklist incorporated a fifth category, titled Course materials, owing to its significance. Each of the five major categories includes many items, totaling 25 sub-items. Additionally, several statements have been reworded after pilot testing by experienced instructors from the department of English language and literature in Setif 2 university. This checklist is applicable regardless of the subject of study, as Doolittle and Siudzinski (2010) showed via their research that syllabi' elements are largely consistent across a wide range of fields and academic establishments. It is noteworthy that the difference between the checklist' and questionnaire's sections is that the questionnaire's sections were subject to only the foundational sections presented in the accredited syllabus, whilst those of the checklist were based on the components deemed essential in the literature. The findings of the checklist aid in cross-checking the questionnaire's findings. Additionally, the 25-item checklist made no attempt to assess the effectiveness or quality of approved syllabus components, focusing instead on their presence or absence. Therefore, the data were quantitatively analyzed.

2.5. Pilot Testing of Research Instruments

Piloting research instruments increases the research's validity and reliability. For a questionnaire, the ethical challenge was to develop one that is objective and does not ask questions in a way that leads to the researcher's desired answers (Gideon, 2012). Accordingly, four teachers from the University of Mohamed Lamine Debaghine Setif 2 reviewed the questionnaire and proposed revisions. Additionally, teachers have been involved throughout the pilot testing process of the interview. The majority of the comments addressed terminology-related issues and the number of questions presented. Their comments have been incorporated into the design of instruments' final versions. For the checklist, it has been modified in response to teachers' comments and the researcher's justified conclusions obtained from the literature.

III. Results and Discussion:

Data analysis is the process by which a researcher extracts "meaning" from obtained data. It is a statistical technique for reducing raw data in order to provide presentations, interpretations,

and conclusions about the study's results (Merriam, 1998). For the quantitative data in this research, descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were performed using SPSS v26. For the qualitative data, the process of producing codes and themes was used.

Also, the research study employed factor analysis to analyze the questionnaire. Factor analysis is a statistical approach that establishes an empirical basis for obtaining independent variable clusters within a small number of variables by connecting them at a medium level or based on their relative significance to one another. Thus, a vast number of variables may be condensed into a few clusters. These are referred to as factors (Gall & Borg, 1989).

Quantitative Phase

This section presents the results from the questionnaire with teachers and the checklist.

3.1. Questionnaire's Analysis and Interpretation

The questionnaire for this research was constructed in such a manner to ascertain if the accredited syllabus incorporates all of the aspects considered essential in the literature and, therefore, to determine its perceived usefulness by teachers. Thus, if the majority of teachers agree with the statements, this implies that teachers have a favorable opinion of the already accredited syllabus' c components. If, on the other hand, the majority of teachers disagree with the questionnaire's items, this shows that teachers have a negative perception of the syllabus and that action is necessary. Table 2 illustrates the factors that have been constructed.

- For table 4: Frequency distribution and percentages were calculated for participants' background information.
- For table 5: the total means and standard deviations were calculated for each subcategory. This process was done because displaying the frequencies and percentages for each individual item in the questionnaire would require more space.

During means calculation, the following point intervals were established for the measurement scale: (1- 1.79 "Strongly Disagree"), (1.80-2.59 "Disagree"), (2.60-3.39 " Uncertain"), (3.40-4.19 "Agree"), and (4.20-5 "Strongly Agree"). The intervals were computed using the 5-1=4 and 4/5=0.80 formulae (Karatas & Fer, 2009). Each scale item was assigned a transmutation equivalent with a constant interval of 0.80, which resulted in the following categorization of the scale item means:

Table (3): Categorization of Weighted Mean

Weight	Opinion	Weighted mean
5	Strongly Agree	4.20 – 5
4	Agree	3.40 – 4.19
3	Uncertain	2.60 – 3.39
2	Disagree	1.8 – 2.59
1	Strongly Disagree	1 – 1.79

Part One: Background Information Section

Table (4): Frequency and Percentage Values Pertaining to The Research Sample

Description	Freq	%	Description	Freq	%
Academic Qualification			**If Yes, how often do you make use of it?**		
Master	0	0	Very Frequently	0	0
Magister	1	33.3	Frequently	0	0
PhD	2	66.7	Occasionally	1	100
Other	0	0	Rarely	0	0
			Very Rarely	0	0

English Teaching Experience			If No, what do you follow instead?		
5 years	1	-	Devise your own lessons	2	66.7
6 years	1	-	Resort to internet sources	2	66.7
7 years	1	-	Adapt a book as the main reference	0	0
Teaching the Culture Module			Adapt a specific syllabus from universities abroad	0	0
2 years	1	-	Others	0	0
3 years	1	-			
5 years	1	-			
Following an Accredited Syllabus					
Yes	1	33.3			
No	2	66.7			

According to table 4, the majority of respondents (66.7 %) claimed to have a Ph.D., while one claimed to hold a Magister's degree (33.3%). All responders have between five and seven years of experience teaching English. Additionally, table 4 indicates that instructors have between two and five years of experience teaching the cultural module. The majority of responders (66.7 %) said that they did not teach the culture module as per the accredited syllabus. However, only one responder (33.3 %) claimed that s/he sometimes followed the accredited syllabus. Consequently, it is indicated that the majority of respondents (66.7 %) opted to construct their own lessons and rely on Internet resources rather than adhering to the accredited syllabus.

Part 2: Syllabus Design Section

The questionnaire and factor analysis have been used to determine whether teachers consider that the currently ACS encompasses certain key components. As such, to generate an informed judgment on the usefulness of the syllabus under scrutiny for them.

Table (5): The Mean and Standard Deviation Values of Teachers' Aggregated Responses

Questionnaire Sections	# of items	Total Means	Total SDs	Opinion
1. Educational Goals and Objectives				
a. Appropriateness of structure and meaning.	10	2.26	0.56	
b. Learner-related factors.	3	2.66	0.57	Neutral
c. Syllabus goal path.	2	3.16	1.04	
2. Syllabus Content				
a. Presentation of the content.	4	2.33	0.28	
b. Syllabus types.	4	2.33	0.28	
c. Possible culture content.	10	2.00	0.22	Disagree
d. Learner-related factors.	4	2.25	0.43	
e. Teaching-related factors.	3	2.44	0.19	
3. Assessment and Evaluation Policy	5	2.53	0.30	Disagree
4. Instructional Materials and Resources				
a. Availability of materials.	4	2.16	0.14	Disagree
b. Usefulness of materials.	4	2.00	0.50	
5. Miscellaneous	3	2.33	0.66	Disagree
Overall Average	56	2.58	0.47	**Disagree**

Teachers' Perspective of the Accredited Syllabus' Educational Goals and Objectives

The three items of this category related to the educational goals and objectives namely item (a) (Appropriateness of structure and meaning, mean score of 2.26), item (b) (Learner-related factors, mean score 2.66), item (c) (Syllabus goal path, mean score 3.16) come in disagree, uncertain, and uncertain categories respectively of the point interval described earlier. The emergence of the category "uncertain" revealed that teachers do not share the same view

regarding the educational goals and objectives as they do not completely disagree upon the unusefulness of this section in the accredited syllabus.

Teachers' Perspective of the Accredited Syllabus Content

This section consists of 5 items regarding the content of the accredited syllabus. Among the above items, item (a) (Presentation of the content) and item (b) (syllabus type) with the mean ($\bar{x}$) of 2.33 for each item are the most disagreed upon items by teachers. Item (e) (Teaching-related factors), Item (d) (Learner-related factors), and item (c) (Possible culture content) and with the mean score of 2.44, 2.25, and 2.00, respectively show that the teachers disagree with the sufficiency of input regarding teaching-related factors (e.g., considering teachers' expectations), culture content, and learner related factors (e.g., students' level, background knowledge, needs). In total, teachers disagree with the compatibility of this section of necessary items in the accredited syllabus which in turn indicates the unusefulness and poorness of the content at the level of the accredited syllabus.

Teachers' Perspective of the Accredited Syllabus Assessment and Evaluation Policy

The mean score for this section is 2.53, which falls inside the defined interval's disagree category. This merely demonstrates that instructors disagree that the accredited syllabus of culture is useful and comprehensive at the level of assessment section items

Teachers' perspective of the accredited Syllabus Instructional Materials and Resources

Two categories, (a) (availability of materials) and (b) (utility of materials) with a mean ($\bar{x}$) 2.16 and 2.00, respectively, fall into the disagree category. It can be inferred that the materials and references included in the accredited syllabus are of little use to teachers.

Teachers' Perspectives on the Accredited Syllabus' Incorporation of More Information

The mean score for this section is 2.33, which is within the defined interval's disagree category. This implies that teachers disagree that the module's time allotment is sufficient. This also reflects the lack of a thorough description of the module in the accredited syllabus, as well as the fact that the semesters' titles do not necessarily correlate to the module's content.

Overall, table 5 revealed that the teachers of the culture module disagreed on input components that comprise the current syllabus, with their average response being 2.58. As disagreement indicates dissatisfaction, teachers are not in favor of the components and of the currently accredited syllabus of culture, emphasizing the need for syllabus reform.

3.2. Evaluation Checklist Grid Analysis and Interpretation

Table (6): The Grid of Ticked Items on the Evaluation Checklist

	Semester One		Semester Two	
Instructor Information	**Not Included**	**Included**	**Not Included**	**Included**
1.Instructor's Name	x		x	
2.Instructor's Meeting Hours and Location	x		x	
3.Contact information: phone, email; preferred method for communication	x		x	
Course Information				
1.Course Name		x		x
2.Course Number	x		x	
3.Course Description/Purpose	x		x	
4.Course Goal (s)		x		x
5.Course Objectives	x		x	
6. Course Location	x		x	
7.Course Days/ Time/ Duration	x		x	

8.Topics covered each week/module	x		x	
9.Course Calendar (A detailed, weekly schedule of activities, noting official university breaks)	x		x	
10.Course Due Dates	x		x	
11.Prerequisite requirements		x		x
Grading Information				
1.Grading Policy (Explanation of how student work will be assessed and what feedback to expect)	x		x	
2.Grading Scale	x		x	
3.Assignment Names (a listing of graded items such as quizzes, tests, participation, projects, etc.)		x		x
4. Assignment Descriptions	x		x	
Course Materials				
1.Required textbooks and resources: Title, author, edition, ISBN	x		x	
2.Recommended texts and resources: Title, author, edition, ISBN, and how to assess them (Libraries, Canvas, etc.)		x		x
Policy Information				
1.Late Work Policy	x		x	
2.Attendance Policy	x		x	
3.Missed Work Policy	x		x	
4.Honor Code (cheating, plagiarism) Policy	x		x	
Total (25/25)	**20**	**05**	**20**	**05**

The data indicate that the following syllabus components already exist in the current culture syllabus for both semesters: Course Name, Course Goal (s), Prerequisite requirements (in terms of recommended prior knowledge), Recommended texts and resources (they were stated in terms of references), and Assignment Names (such as readings and class discussions, term exam). Some sections were completely absent, including instructors' information, and policy information. Some elements were missing under the already existing sections. The following components were missing from the section on course information: the course number, the course description/purpose, the course objectives, the course location, the course days/time/duration, the topics covered each week/module, the course calendar, and the course due dates. The section on Grading information was lacking the Grading Policy, Grading Scale, and assignment names. Course Materials, such as required textbooks and resources, as well as any pertinent media, are also absent from the existing culture syllabus. These findings from the questionnaire and checklist corroborate prior research indicating that syllabi, particularly those in specialized fields of study, are deficient in critical elements (Davidson et al., 2003; Drisko, 2008).

Qualitative Phase

This section presents the results from the interviews with teachers.

3.3. Follow-Up Interview Analysis and Interpretation

Teachers' Perceptions of the Usefulness of the ACS for Students

- Have you handed the students a copy of the accredited syllabus at the beginning of the year? And Why?

Teachers responded that they do not think it is essential to provide students with the existing syllabus since it is deficient in information and does not reflect actual classroom practices. Teachers think that the syllabus should be constructed in such a way that students revisit it several times during the academic year, which is not the case with the present syllabus. This is also supported by the literature. For instance, Littlefield (1999) proposes that for the syllabus to be practical, it should operate as a structural tool for student work, a means of motivating

students to achieve their academic goals, and a contract between faculty and students about expectations. Similarly, Wolf et al. (2014) highlight that the syllabus outlines the student's and teacher's tasks and responsibilities. Therefore, students who were not handed syllabi at the beginning of classes may be deprived of the myriad of advantages that well-designed syllabi offer. Students lack a clear understanding of what they were expected to accomplish by the end of the course, how they would be evaluated, and how the course would be run in general. This vagueness might have a negative effect on students' performance. This is congruent with Serafin' s (1990) research which found a correlation between syllabus adjustments and students' final grades. Course syllabuses with clear objectives, content, teaching resources, and grading criteria make it simpler for students to understand what they are studying and enhance their grades accordingly. However, if the existing culture syllabus lacks crucial elements that may aid students in their learning process, teachers' reluctance to provide the syllabus to students at the start of the year is reasonable.

Teachers' Preferences Regarding the Culture Syllabus Sections

There were a number of key concerns raised by teachers after the transcription and coding of their responses to the open-ended questions. It is worth noting that the question was the same throughout all sections.

- In your opinion, how would you prefer this section in the syllabus document to be? the sections are (i.e., *Educational Goals and Objective, Syllabus Content, Assessment and Evaluation, Instructional Materials and Resources, and miscellaneous ?*

Section 1: Goals and Objectives

Teachers' answers to this section focused on two primary areas: structure and content.

Structure: teachers claimed that (a) the objectives should be clearly communicated. (b) The goal here is wide in scope. Teachers may have various interpretations of this one goal, which might lead to different objectives. (c) The terminology is broad and imprecise. Teachers claimed that using verbs such as "aware", "stimulate", "improve" to describe a mental behavior (critical thinking) is inappropriate. Stimulating and improving students' critical thinking is a broad goal that needs detailed specifications of objectives on how to accomplish this broad goal. Johnson and Ferguson (1998) stressed the importance of having defined objectives as opposed to vague ones. For example, terms like "know", "appreciate", and "understand" should be avoided in favor of terms such as "identify", "analyze" and "implement".

Content: Teachers claimed that they attempted to define their own objectives based on their interpretations of the broad statement of goal in the accredited syllabus. They emphasized that the module's objective should be to teach students practical ideas linked to cross-cultural communication and how to use these concepts in real-life situations, rather than just to compel them to read about these topics.

Section 2: Syllabus Content

Interestingly, teachers imparted varying views on the kind of content that should be included in the module and, more specifically, on its orientation. According to one teacher, syllabus content should be skill-based, with a focus on developing students' intercultural competence rather than on lecturing them about cultural notions (the what). For instance, as the teacher stated:

> *"What to do in the appropriate situation and how to behave in an appropriate situation in a certain culture. i.e., communication skills, intercultural communication skills, dealing with the other and understanding your body language, how does this affect the other, how other people understand your culture, how to be more aware of your culture, how to make the others understand why you behave in a certain way."*

Another teacher argued that the current syllabus should be knowledge-based and that it is necessary to deliver it exclusively theoretically owing to students' lack of previous knowledge. This signifies that the ultimate goal of learning here is to equip students only with knowledge of

culture rather than how this knowledge can help students develop their communication skills i.e. knowledge of culture rather than knowledge of communication.

However, another teacher noted that the content should not only educate students on how to be global citizens but also equip them with relevant real-world experiences. These divergent viewpoints demonstrate why syllabus goals and objectives must be precise and straightforward from the beginning. It has been shown that It is critical to engage students in exploratory interactions with their teachers, peers, and others outside the classroom, particularly through activities such as discussions and role-playing that allow them to learn about culture while also developing their intercultural awareness and flexibility — two dimensions of intercultural competence identified by Byram (1997).

The point of students' background knowledge has been also raised at this point in the sense that some teachers claimed students to have a low level of prior knowledge or pre-requisites to succeed in the course. They stressed the need for the integration of a pre-reading activity that comes before any class in order for them to be able to address more practical aspects of intercultural communication. Interestingly, The State of Queensland's Department of Education (2002, as cited in Campbell & Campbell, 2008) has addressed this issue, referring to this viewpoint as "high connection" and "low connection" learning. The former enables students to connect their existing knowledge to the classroom's topics, skills, and competencies. By contrast, low connection learning introduces new content without engaging students' prior knowledge directly or explicitly. Other studies emphasized the important role prior knowledge plays in increasing students' academic success (Marzano et al., 2000; Smith et al., 2001). Various studies have shown comparable results (Chen, 2008; Hwang & Hsu, 2011). Pre-reading, according to these investigations, helped students retain important points and ambiguous ideas prior to class, allowing them to concentrate on the parts of the lecture that tackled the ideas they had previously struggled to grasp. In their research, Wu-Yuin Hwang and Guo-Liang Hsu in 2011 found that pre-reading had a positive effect on learning performance in the sense that it aids students to better understand lectures and increases their confidence in their test performance. Therefore, and according to teachers, it is clear that the pre-requisites of this course do not align with the actual level and knowledge of students regarding culture-related topics. This point is critical to consider in the design of a remedial culture syllabus that addresses the gaps in the current one.

Section 3: Evaluation

All teachers agreed that the evaluation plan should align with the module's objectives. Some teachers claimed that they cannot avoid the traditional continuous and final exams types of evaluation. This implies that the assessment procedure is didactic in nature since it is concerned with the students' knowledge. The latter is the first dimension in Byram's model of intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 1997). Nonetheless, teaching students about cross-cultural communication is more than requiring them with the required knowledge. This is why another teacher has suggested that rather than requiring students to study a specific cultural reference, evaluation procedures should be more practical and engaging.

One teacher explained this as follows:

> *"Give them a text to read and they will become critical thinkers!!! No! We should encourage students to be more engaged to do some kind of ethnographic projects, go and find out about this culture. Find an international student and ask him some target questions and make a comparison with your home culture".*

Section 4: Instructional Materials and Resources

Teachers believe that tools and references should be up-to-date, considering students' attachment to technology today. They should be more interactive and make use of technology to assist students in developing their intercultural communication skills. The results also indicated that the references in the syllabus are ineffective because most of them are paid and inaccessible for teachers.

One teacher put it this way:

"The tools are not really necessary, we teachers most of the time rely on different other sources that are not listed in the official program".

Section 5: Miscellaneous

Teachers have reported that the existing syllabus is deficient in many crucial aspects. Accordingly, they have made the following suggestions.

(a) A balance must be established between the time allotted for module's instruction and the number of Master One students. Due to the large class size, teachers were compelled to offer just lectures and not tutorial sessions in 2019. By 2021, the tutorial sessions have been fully eliminated in favor of lectures that were delivered online. This raises the question of whether the instructional time allotment is appropriate for the length and depth of the topic and whether or not this impacts students' learning?

(b) The syllabus should begin with a broad description, followed by goals and objectives.

(c) The titles of the module in each semester should reflect the objectives and content of the module. One teacher pointed out that the issue is that those who proposed titles are not the ones who proposed the content. The teacher further explained her idea:

"Most of the time the title of the course is pretty much very far from what you read inside and far from what we do in the class."

Overall,

It is evident that teachers perceive the existing culture syllabus as inadequate and ineffective. One teacher explained this inadequacy as follows:

"Although we try really hard to stick to the official program, to the guidelines in the official program, you find that there are a lot of things missing, so you as a teacher should do something about it. You should try to include a new material, new objectives, new evaluation methods ...etc."

Numerous flaws seem to characterize the existing syllabus' various sections. Teachers' suggestions for syllabus enhancements should be considered as they arise from actual teaching experiences. Young (1988) asserts that teachers' classroom encounters significantly impact the nature of their involvement in syllabus development. Teachers argued that collaboration between syllabus designers and module teachers, as well as coordination among module teachers, should be established. The interview findings support the conclusion that the existing syllabus is only marginally beneficial and requires significant revisions.

The syllabus' importance for teachers has been documented in the literature which reveals that the current state of the culture syllabus is inconsistent with the features of a good syllabus established in the literature. According to Nehring (2009), a good syllabus "is useful to the professors because it helps them think through how best to organize the course content" (p.53). An equally important role of a good syllabus, according to O'Brien et al. (2009), is to increase teachers' professionalism, not to constrain or de-professionalize them. Teachers may use it to plan and organize their course, direct their lesson plans, keep their objectives in view, and set ground rules for productive work environments. Therefore, teachers' feedback might aid in the remediation of the present syllabus in order to fulfill teachers' expectations and address noted deficiencies.

IV. Conclusion and Perspectives for Future Research:

The purpose of this research was to analyze if the elements regarded as important in syllabi are included in the currently ACS and to determine the culture syllabus ' usefulness for teachers in charge of the module. It has been established that the current syllabus of culture lacks some of the main details related to the sections in the syllabus which are detailed content, assessment procedures, and references. Simultaneously, the syllabus lacks critical components such as the statement of course objectives, the course number, the course overview, the course location, the course days and duration, the topics covered per week/semester, the course calendar, the course

due dates, and the grading policy, grading scale, task names, course materials such as textbooks and required resources, as well as any relevant media. The findings indicate that teachers have devalued the present syllabus as they do not refer to it while planning lessons nor do they, direct students to it for module-related information. In light of these results, this study recommends that a remedial syllabus should be devised to address the inadequacies of the current syllabus while also making it more advantageous for teachers and students, due to its significance. Triangulation of data from questionnaires, interviews, and the evaluation checklist found no significant disparity between teachers' viewpoints and the information presented in the literature on the urge for the culture syllabus redesign. A redesign that incorporates teachers' recommendations as indicated in this study, students' needs, and researchers' contributions to the body of literature on this topic.

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Appendices

Appendix A: The Currently Accredited Syllabus of Culture for Both Semesters

Intitulé du Master : Sciences du Langage et Didactique

Semestre *:* 1

Intitulé de l'UE : Découverte

Intitulé de la matière : Cross Cultural Communication (**CCC**)

Crédits : 2

Coefficients : 2

Objectifs de l'enseignement:

By dealing with western perceptions of the Arab world and vice-versa, this course aims at making the students aware about misconceptions and distortions that arise among differing cultures; thus, it provides them with the necessary tools that intellectually stimulate and improve their critical thinking.

Connaissances préalables recommandées:

Culture de la Langue, Civilisation Islamique, Contacts et Relations de Cultures

Contenu de la matière:

- ✓ English as object and medium of (mis)understanding
- ✓ Conflict and assimilation among different cultures
- ✓ Functions of stereotypes and prejudices in the process of cross-cultural communication
- ✓ 'East' vs. 'West'
- ✓ Clash of cultures or within cultures?

Mode d'évaluation: Readings and class discussions, term exam

Références:

Anheier, Helmut K. and Yudhishthir Raj Isar. *Cultures and Globalization: Conflicts and Tensions.* Sage Publications, 2007.

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Intitulé du Master : Sciences du Langage et Didactique

Semestre *:* 2

Intitulé de l'UE : Découverte

Intitulé de la matière : Teaching Culture in the EFL Classroom

Crédits : 2

Coefficients : 2

Objectifs de l'enseignement:

Students are expected to develop an awareness of the interrelationship language/culture and to develop ways to integrate the cultural component in the English language teaching class.

Connaissances préalables recommandées:

Ingénierie Educative, Littérature in EFL

Contenu de la matière:

- ✓ Definition of culture
- ✓ Culture, language and communication
- ✓ The place of culture in foreign language teaching
- ✓ Teaching culture

Mode d'évaluation: Class Participation and Exam

Références *(Livres et polycopiés, sites internet, etc).*

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Appendix B: Teachers Likert Scale Questionnaire

Teachers Questionnaire

Dear Respondent,

The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect information on actual teachers' views regarding the official syllabus[1] of the module of culture addressed to master one students. Views about the syllabus will be collected in terms of **(1) Educational Goals and Objective, (2) Syllabus Content, (3) Evaluation, (4) Instructional Materials and Resources,** and **(5) Miscellaneous**. Based on the data collected, an evaluation of the official culture syllabus will be established.

You are kindly requested to tick **(√)** one of the five choices which best corresponds to your point of view in addition to providing the necessary information for the open-ended questions.

This questionnaire is solely for research purposes and all information given is strictly confidential.

Thank you for your cooperation.

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[1] The official syllabus here means the one accredited by the ministry of education. It is attached in this link: https://drive.google.com/file/d/16d45lvQdLGszqVQiP0tAU7wt4Ywvxq5G/view?usp=sharing

1

Section 1: Background Information

1. What is your highest academic qualification?

☐ Master   ☐ Magister   ☐ PhD   ☐ Other, please specify ………….……….

2. How long have you been teaching English at University?

....

3. How long have you been working as a teacher of the culture module?

....

4. Do you follow an accredited syllabus of the culture module provided by the ministry of education?

   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

☐ 4.1. If yes, to what extent do you use the culture syllabus?

Very Frequently   ☐   Frequently   ☐

Occasionally   ☐   Rarely   ☐

Very Rarely   ☐

☐ 4.2. If no, what do you follow instead? You, (You can choose more than an option)

Devise your own lessons   ☐

Resort to internet sources   ☐

Adapt a book as the main reference   ☐

Adapt a specific syllabus from universities abroad   ☐

Other, please specify   ☐

………
………
………….

Section 2: Educational Goals and Objectives

Section 2: Educational Goals and Objectives	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.The educational goal (s) of the official syllabus is (are) clearly stated.					
2.The educational objectives are clearly stated.					
3.The educational objectives align with the education goal (s) of the syllabus.					
4.The objectives set for each semester are realistic.					
5.There are detailed learning outcomes set for each module of the syllabus.					
6.The set goals and objectives provide me with clear guidelines to generate the content of the module.					
7.I prefer that the objectives follow bloom's taxonomy for setting goals and objectives.					
8.The objectives are written using active verbs that specify definite, observable behaviors.					
9.Words such as "know", "understand" are avoided in the statements of objectives.					
The statements of objectives are declarative statements that can be assessed by a single assessment method, i.e., they are expressed in ways that do not combine several outcomes into a single statement entailing the use of several assessment methods					
10.The syllabus objectives are appropriate to the level of first-year master learners.					
11.The objectives are learner-centered.					
12.The objectives describe learner rather than teacher behaviors.					
13.The syllabus's goal path is to apply the learned information in actual life.					
14.The syllabus's goal path is mainly to equip learners with the academic knowledge related to the module of culture.					

Section 3: Syllabus Content

Section 3: Syllabus Content	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.The content of the syllabus is logically sequenced.					
2.The content is demonstrated in terms of units with the topics associated with each unit and week hours.					
3.The content is overloaded considering the instructional hours allotted for this academic syllabus.					
The content represents a natural extension to the objectives of the syllabus in the way that the content helps learners to achieve the set objectives.					
4.The content of the syllabus is language-based.					
5.The content of the syllabus is skills-based.					
6.The content of the syllabus is learning-based.					
7.The syllabus is a mixture of the previous three types.					
8.The content helps learners to maintain the ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions", for instance in homes, schools and at weddings.					

9.The content helps learners to maintain the ability to deal with social conventions", such as appropriate manners while eating, dressing and meeting people.					
10.The content helps learners to be confident with values, beliefs and attitudes", for example, to know what worries people and what makes them proud of or ashamed.					
11.The content helps learners to maintain the ability to use verbal communication means", like to greet, apologize, make requests, express gratitude embarrassment and love.					
12.The content helps learners to maintain the ability to use non-verbal language", i.e., body language and facial expressions.					
13.The content addresses notions of commonly known history of the foreign culture.					
14.The content addresses notions of geography of the foreign culture.					
15.The content addresses notions of literature of the foreign culture.					
16.The content addresses notions of art and music of the foreign culture.					
17.The content is compatible with learners' needs.					
18.The content is appropriate to first year master learners' level.					
19.The content relies on learners' background knowledge for building new one.					
20.Learners come with the prior knowledge recommended before launching the syllabus.					
21.The content matches my expectations as a teacher					
22.The syllabus considers teaching the home culture along with the foreign culture.					
23.Teaching the home culture of learners along with the foreign one is not mentioned in the syllabus at all.					

Section 4: Evaluation	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Uncertain**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
1.The evaluation methods mentioned are sufficient.					
2.I use other evaluation methods besides the ones mentioned in the syllabus document.					
3.The evaluation methods are appropriate for the content and learning objectives.					
4.The syllabus proposes types of activities to evaluate learners' attainments during the session.					
5.Overall, the evaluation plan is clear.					

Section 5: Instructional Materials and Resources	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.The tools and text materials that will be used in the syllabus are listed.					
2.The resources are up to date and diverse (books, links, videos, CDs, mp3…etc.)					
3.The materials listed are available and accessible to teachers.					
4.The syllabus document contains clear and detailed information on library resources and academic support for learners also.					
5.The materials listed are appropriate and sufficient to develop rich lesson plans.					
6.I, most of the time, rely on other sources rather than the ones listed in the syllabus document to develop my lessons.					
7.The materials satisfy the various teaching styles.					
8.The materials satisfy the various learning styles.					

Section 6: Miscellaneous	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.The instructional hours allotted for each semester are appropriate to the breadth and depth of the content and objectives of the syllabus.					
2.A broad description of the syllabus is mentioned in the document.					
3.The titles given to the module in each semester adequately reflect the content to be taught.					

Thank you for your time!